STEEL DIVISION II

ART BOOK

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the art of Steel Division 2.

In the pages in front of you, you will find an in-depth look into the art direction, from conception to production, of our new World War 2 real-time strategy game. We want to show you the fruits of our labor, and lift a veil on the countless hours of hard work that went into making our vision of Steel Division 2 a reality.

Steel Division 2 is the direct successor to Steel Division: Normandy 44, which was set in hedgerow-lined Northwest France and covered D-Day and the Allied invasion in June 1944.

Creating a second game bearing the name Steel Division underpinned the art direction from an early start. There is a strong connection between the two titles. For instance, both take place roughly during the same momentous summer days of 1944. The location in Steel Division 2 is completely different, however, with the player moved to the vast expanses and deep wilderness of the Eastern Front.

Transported to the other side of the war, players will experience the massive strategic operation Bagration, when the Soviet Red Army delivered a crushing defeat to an overwhelmed Wehrmacht, with the fighting taking place across extensive forests, swamplands, rolling countryside, and rural villages and towns of Belarus.

The art direction of Steel Division 2 carries this change of place, this increase of scale. As such, we aimed to recreate the combat in a realistic and visually impressive way.

Let's take a look.

THE ART STYLE

As the second game in the Steel Division series, a visual continuity with its predecessor was a vital consideration in our art direction. There was enough room to forge a new identity, though.

At Eugen, we always try to improve and build upon our aspirations and designs. With Steel Division 2 this means more realism, with a particular focus on the increase in scale (more units, longer fighting distances). We wanted to delve deeper into the heart of the World War 2 military experience.

The Eastern Front has often been described as a brutal, all-consuming theatre of war. We set out to change that perspective, to have the player immerse themselves in the fighting in an authentic and stunning way.
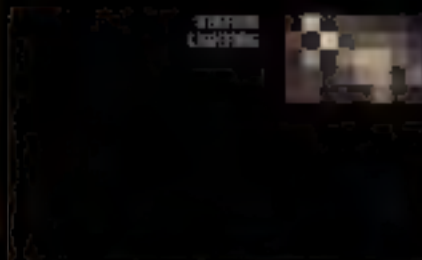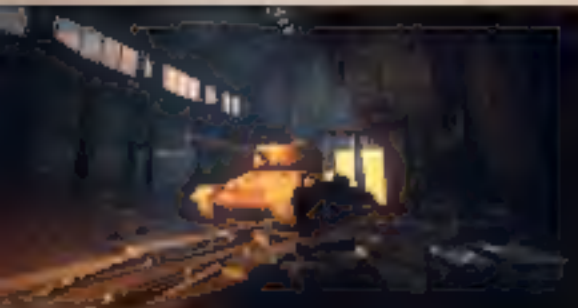
Our art style reflects this. From the different color palettes to the map design and the way we moved the camera closer to the action. We take great care in getting all the details right.

ARMORY

The Armory is our virtual museum. It is the central stage where you can inspect each of the 600 units in the game, not only their detailed statistics but also their models and textures.

The unit is the centerpiece of the podium-like Armory. The design of the viewing area takes hints from a sumptuous train station concourse to a more industrial hangar.

Playing with different lighting configurations allows us to bring out the best possible version of each vehicle or plane.

STATION
LIGHTING

ARTIFICIAL
LIGHTING

SCENERY

Environment, and the scenery it contains, is essential to our visual experience. Our effort is to convey something real, but at the same time making it fit within the larger picture of the game. Scenery can be large structures, such as wooden or girder bridges, to smaller buildings like the rural farmhouses, and even the tiniest of details such as the foliage of different species of trees. They all tell a story. Did you spot the rusty tractors abandoned on the battlefield?

As we set out to recreate Belarus, it was tough to find enough black-and-white reference photos from this region. Compared to the environments of Normandy, this was a real challenge. The region didn't feature many towns and cities - most of the Eastern Front contained large stretches of wilderness. However, buildings and other man-made structures were still present.

We took pains to make sure every detail was correct, from the arch of the landscape to the texture of wood, and the shape of a farmhouse roof. Each of the models took many hours to produce.

DESTRUCTIONS

Combat can't occur without lots of things breaking and blowing up. In Steel Division 2, this happens a lot, and as such, we wanted to take destruction to the next level.

Vehicles feature different damage models, from pristine to damaged to destroyed. Various special effects enhance the 3D models further, from flames and black smoke to sparks and fiery explosions.

There are a host of details which are easily missed during heavy combat. If there is an explosion in a forest, a patch of burnt land appears with some trees felled, while others on the outer ring have their trunks on fire. Shot-up airplanes trail smoke, while the burning wrecks of tanks mark where they met their ultimate fate on the battlefield.

This is not only nice to look at: a multitude of destroyed vehicles show dangerous combat zones or ambush sites, while planes give the player and their opponents a clear sign on how the fight for control of the sky above is unfolding.
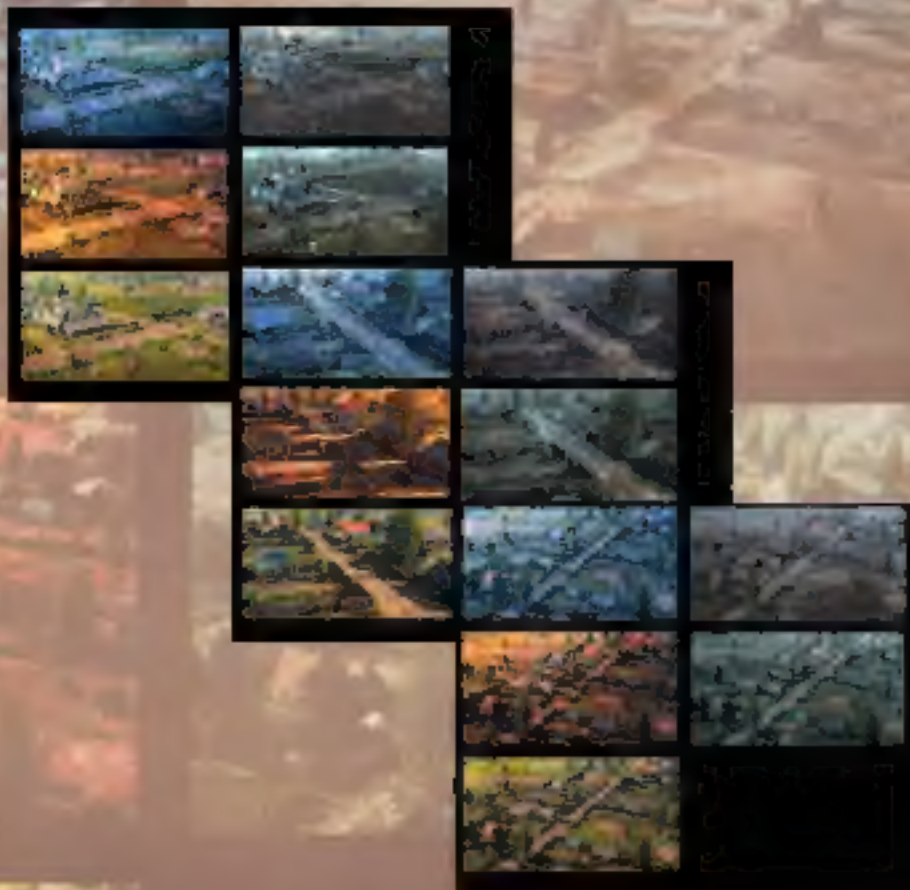
LIGHTING

A meaningful way to change the look and feel of an environment is the use of lighting. We design and playtest different lighting presets for each of the 24 maps of Steel Division 2. A map might see seven to eight different lighting configurations tested before we find one that fits best.

We strive to evoke different moods, with each lighting template able to capture, for instance, the calm of a morning's dawn or the oppressive gloom of an impending storm.

We try to be historically accurate in how we depict our locations, but at the same time, we want to make sure they are as interesting to look at as possible. We never lose sight of the game experience, though. If you play on the same map for 40 minutes, you don't want it to be too bland or boring. Likewise, you don't want to make it difficult to see units, especially not the ones of your opponent.
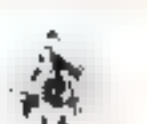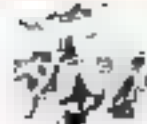
STEEL DIVISION
BAGRATION

KEY ART

STEEL DIVISION II   STEEL DIVISION II   STEEL DIVISION II   STEEL DIVISION II

ess obvious, but equa... important i... the beating, toning and shading of our key art. We tried different hues... hind... ie might look... the Kodachrome... effect

You might not notice it, but we experimented with different variations of the Steel Division 2 logo.

We wanted to promote continuity with the first game, but also to show something new. We played around with the number (either numerical or in Roman style) and the coloring.

Like so many things, keeping it simple is sometimes the most effective way. In the end, we decided to use version 1.

MENUS

The user interface in Steel Division 2 is an underrated but essential part of the experience a player goes through, from booting up to jumping into a battle. With our new game we wanted the menus to be impressive, but at the same time clean.
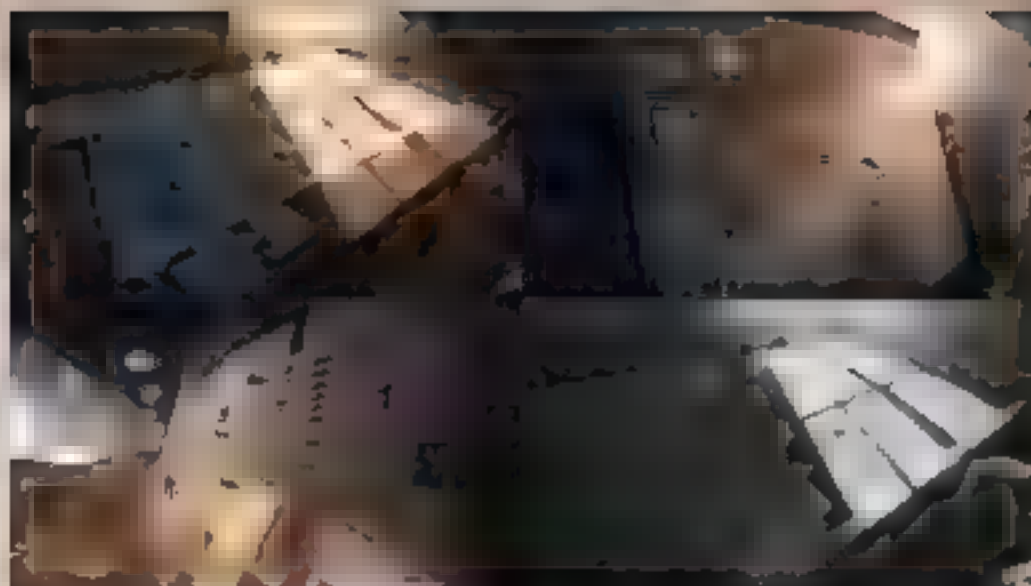
This approach is extended to the menus you see during a tactical battle: they are neutral, to emphasize the units and action in the field.

The command room anchors the main menu. Each nested menu option transitions the viewer to a different part with a intricately modeled room. This is an idea we have employed in our previous games, rise of above, the virtualization concept of placing pictures within pictures.

Much like the Armory, the command room represents a central stage, this time for the player. We wanted to recreate a General's headquarters, so You will find a mahogany desk, a radio set, various maps, papers and official correspondence, a large table for planning purposes.

Preparing, research making sure the various types of documents and maps were authentic and look most of the work, once these building blocks were in place, the actual crafting of the room became relatively straightforward.
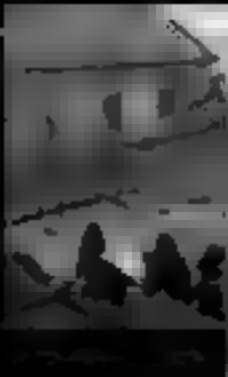
BOO
SOL
MIL T
BATTL OPS
PROFIL
OPTIONS
MOD CENTER

The mood artworks were one of the first things we made for Steel Division 2. We used these concept art images to better understand the feeling and atmosphere we wanted to achieve. They don't only focus on landscapes or the action, but also units, infantry, vehicles, and so on.

We were very happy with the results. Instead of using these illustrations only in the pre-production stage, we decided to further flesh out a number of the most promising pictures to be used as our loading screens.

We wanted to show different aspects of war, including a human perspective. This meant not only featuring iconic vehicles, but also highly detailed soldiers from all the various factions.
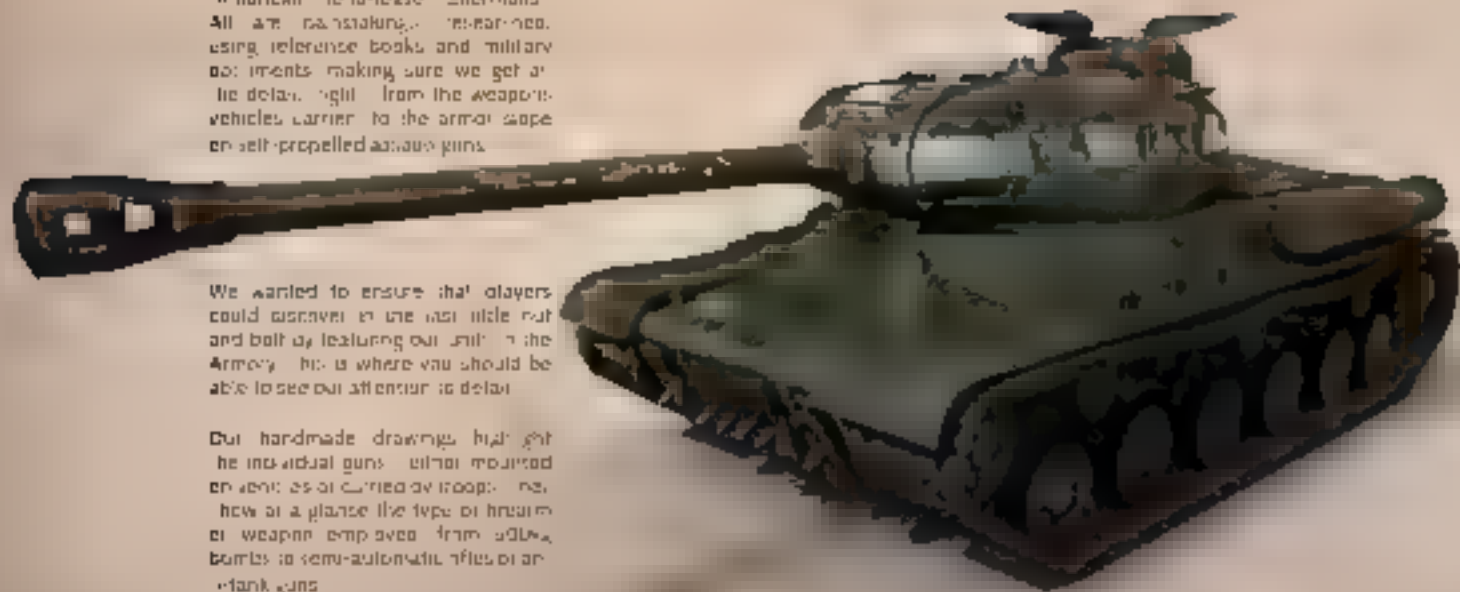
THE WEAPONS

We ake orde in eu elfort to reale an authenti a d realistic World War 2 pame n Steel Division 2 eve uOO unds w be playab e from Hungarian hussar nfantr y to soviet Emma anks morican lend-lease shermans All are painstakingly researched using reference books and military do: uments making sure we get al he detail right from the weapons vehicles carrier to the armor slope en self-propelled assauo guns.

We wanted to ensure that players could discover en the last little nut and bolt by featuring our unit in the Armory his is where you should be able to see our attention to detail

Our hardmade drawings high ght he inc vidual guns either mounted en vehic es or carried ov troops hey hew at a glance the type of firearm or weapon empi yed from pistor bombs to semi-automatic rfles or an tank guns
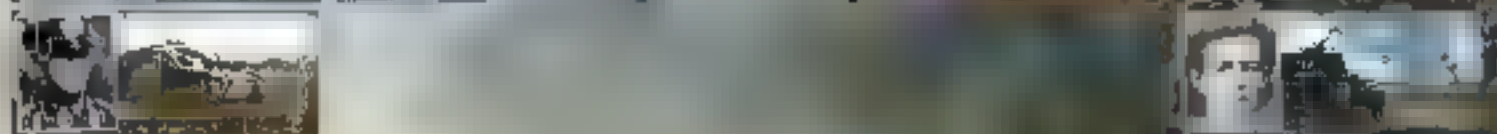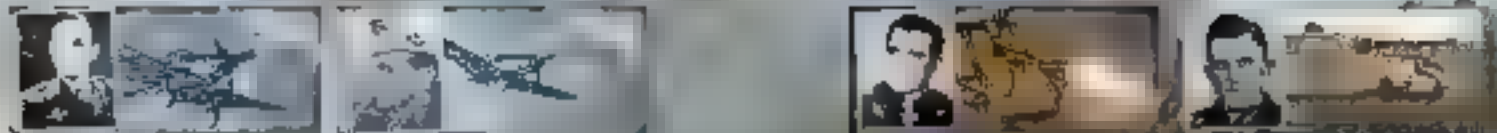
PREORDER ACES

In a World War 2 strategic campaign as massive as operation Barbarossa, we felt the need to highlight the human perspective as much as we could. That's why we made sure to pay special attention to our preorder Aces, those acclaimed soldiers and commanders who achieved remarkable feats during the war.

The Aces in Steel Division 2 all come with their own personality and background, based in most cases on the real life of the personnel, vehicles and crews they operated. Researching these extraordinary persons was challenging at times, as we had to find the right Ace for each unit.

The in-game strength of these Aces reflect their wartime exploits. In most cases, our Aces were extremely successful on the battlefield. We made sure that we included all the different nations you won't just find both German and Russian, but also French and Hungarian Aces.

STRATEGIC GAME

steel Division features the brand-new Army General mode. We have put in a lot of work to get... here for turn-based dynamic strategic campaigns just as it. Setting off, we needed to answer three different questions: how are we going to draw the map, how do we display the names of units and how do we display the units themselves.

As a completely new single player mode, something that we haven't done before on this scale and complexity, finding the right art style for Army General was paramount to us. The sheer amount of unit counters, the battalions you play with, was one of the many challenges we encountered and... the maps be authentic reproductions of era maps of the era. How do we portray the action, the never-static frontline?

We did a lot of exploration and experimentation to achieve the final design.

We are happy with how Army General turned out. The design features a paper-based map, while at the same time a combination of static pieces and animations to depict the ongoing action. The frontline continuously moves, making our detailed maps look very dynamic.

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